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ABSTRACT

A review of literature and interviews with 57 teachers were conducted to determine general measures and specific strategies to improve teacher satisfaction and reduce teacher dissatisfaction. The 57 interviewees were teachers who had resigned from the New South Wales (Australia) Department of School Education in 1991. The interviews revealed that the teachers' greatest source of satisfaction was clearly pupil achievement. Other sources of satisfaction were changing pupil behavior and attitudes; recognition from others; self-growth and the mastery of subject content and teaching skills; and good relationships with students, parents, and other teachers. Sources of dissatisfaction included changes in educational policy and procedures instituted in the late 1980s and early 1990s, relationships with superiors and the Department of School Education, large class sizes, lack of resources, and lack of respect from children and society. These findings indicate that dissatisfaction tended to be school and system centered and related more to school structure or administration, while sources of satisfaction were more human and affective in nature. The factors responsible for teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction varied with gender, experience, and position held. Factors were largely mutually exclusive and, thus, separate measures need to be implemented to address each. Fourteen strategies for enhancing teacher satisfaction and reducing dissatisfaction are proposed. (Contains 18 references.) (JDD)

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ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF TEACHER SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Education systems worldwide have experienced considerable change in recent years. Schools and teachers have increasingly been required to address and remedy the problems of society while at the same time satisfy the needs of national economies through the provision of appropriately trained school leavers. Youth unemployment levels have remained high and post-compulsory retention has risen. There has been pressure to modify curricula to accommodate these students. There has also been greater public and government scrutiny of how schools and educational systems transform their financial inputs to measurable educational outcomes. The age of the teaching profession has steadily risen and it seems more difficult to entice talented young people to enter teacher training, a situation exacerbated by the general aging of the population which has led to teacher redundancies in some systems. It is in this context that teachers have been expected to operate.

This paper draws upon this contemporary context, an interview study of 57 teachers, and the literature to propose both general measures and specific strategies designed to improve the quality of education through improving teacher satisfaction and reducing teacher dissatisfaction. Research undertaken by the author indicated that the factors responsible for teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction are largely mutually exclusive and thus separate measures need to be implemented to address each, and that they also vary with gender, experience and position held.

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Introduction

There is doubt that the last 30 years have seen enormous change in Australian education. These changes are too numerous to fully describe, but include the following. Many have also been experienced in other countries:

- Changes to established teaching practices e.g. team teaching, open classrooms, vertical streaming, accelerated progression
- Movement from "content" to "process" to "outcomes" in curriculum and teaching
- School-based curriculum development, followed by greater national and state uniformity in curriculum frameworks and outcomes
- Greater federal financial and other involvement in education
- Higher post-compulsory student retention; mature-age re-entry to education
- Longer pre-service training for teachers
- Greater provision of in-service programs, followed by in-service decline
- Increased expectations on schools to solve social problems
- Affirmative action for disadvantaged students and communities
- Broadening of curricula, both "academic" and "vocational" with alternative "pathways"
- Introduction of new policies and "perspectives"
- More flexible teacher career paths, including job sharing, promotion on "merit"
- Increasing infusion of technology in schools
- Greater ties with industry
- Greater articulation with TAFE and higher education generally
- Greater community, union and business involvement in education and concern with "competencies"
- Creation of "Unified National System" of tertiary educational institutions
- Greater autonomy at regional and school levels
- Down-sizing of central educational bureaucracies
- Increased financial responsibility and accountability for schools
- Greater need for educational entrepreneurship and thus sponsorship
- Increased administrative responsibility for schools
- Greater emphasis on efficient management
- Greater emphasis on "excellence"
- Greater freedom of choice in education
- Increased competition between and within systems
- Increased scrutiny and criticism of education
- Teacher redundancies, reduced demand for teachers in some systems
- School closures in some areas/systems
- Increased politicisation of education

The above list is by no means exhaustive. Most if not all of these changes in Australian education have impacted heavily on school leaders and teachers. At the same time, resignation rates have fallen to low levels due to the recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Low teacher resignation and declining birth rates and an aging population generally has seen the average age of Australian teachers pass beyond 40 (Beazley, 1992).

The literature on educational change is voluminous, with many of the measures advocated falling on the classroom teacher and school executive. Implicit in all of this is that education has reached a point where dramatic change is called for to make it more "efficient", "relevant" and "accountable". The language used itself implies criticism, with the word "reform" typically applied (Bourke, 1994). What is missing, however, is an adequate appreciation of the increased load that the teacher has had to bear, at a time when many would have expected to have reached a stage in their career where they were comfortably "on top" of their role.

Change continues unabated in Australian education at the present time, with the Schools Council (1990: 12) noting that "there is no apparent sign of this rate of change decreasing. If anything, the opposite is the case". A major finding of the Schools Council in its report "Australia's Teachers An Agenda for the Next Decade" (1990: i-ii) was that:

> Teacher's work has become more complex and demanding in recent years [and] ... without concomitant changes in their rewards, teachers' commitment is likely to decrease and able and talented people are unlikely to be retained or attracted to teaching ... schools and teachers cannot be expected to deal with the full implications of rising educational expectations in the community, reflected in rising rates of participation in post-compulsory schooling, through gains in efficiency alone. There is a need for the Australian community to acknowledge the extra costs associated with such expectations and demands; and ... to support action to mobilise the necessary resources to deal with them.

At the same time, the store placed in education to solve the nation's social and economic problems has probably never been higher. Bourke (1994: 16) has commented that:

> Changes in Australian education policy are, in the main, political responses to economic and social concerns which relate to Australia's perceived problems and not to education *per se*. The fact that governments have become more interventionist, both at state and federal levels, is both cause and effect of the politicisation of education.

The federal Minister for Employment Education and Training, the Hon. Kim Beazley (1992), highlighted the federal Government's thinking on the importance and future directions of education:

> The reason I wanted an opportunity to talk today ... is that it provides an early opportunity for me in this portfolio to place on record my and my Government's belief that the teaching profession and its performance is central to the economic and cultural development of this nation. And to attest that the hopes of our community as we confront survival in an economically hostile world, rest heavily on the capacity of our teaching profession to impart skills and learning to our people ... The Government is committed to expanding the national skills base by encouraging all Australians to take advantage of the education and training opportunities available to them.
>
> (Unnumbered transcript)

However, Beazley also acknowledged the impact of increased expectations and change upon Australia's teachers, while noting no easing in such demands and pressures in the immediate future:

> While it is relatively easy to develop a reform agenda at the abstract level, too often we overlook the impact of our reforms on the nation's teachers. In recent years the teaching profession has borne the brunt of continual change in education policy, which has affected almost every aspect of teachers' work ... if governments want to implement major reforms in education over the next few years, they will have to pay a lot more attention to the professional needs of Australian teachers ... Australian education will face continual change, challenge and development over the next few years - a process which is essential to our long-term social and economic development.
>
> (Unnumbered transcript)

Clearly, there have been momentous change in all aspects of education in Australia, and with the pace and scope of change showing no sign of easing, the work of teachers and schools is thus likely to become even more complex and burdensome. It is for these reasons that it is timely to reflect on teacher satisfaction and how this might be enhanced, if teachers are to bring to fruition the nation's expectations for education.

The Study: Teacher Resignation

This paper is drawn both from the literature and a study (Dinham, 1992) undertaken to explore teacher resignation. In the study, 57 teachers and educational administrators who had resigned from the New South Wales (NSW) Department of School Education (DSE) in 1991 were interviewed.

Data were analysed using grounded theory techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and a model of teacher persistence was derived which highlighted the complexity of the "resignation decision" and hence, the difficulty in formulating "quick fix" solutions to the problems posed by teacher resignation, including personal, economic and educational cost.

It was found that in the educational system under study, little was being done to prevent teacher resignation or alleviate teacher stress, a significant contributing factor to resignation, and that change in that system since the late 1980s had put increased pressure on those within it. This situation had been exacerbated by societal criticism of teachers and education coupled with increased expectations and responsibilities for schools.

The conduct and results of the study are described in more detail elsewhere (Dinham 1992; 1993; 1994). In brief, the stated purpose of probing more deeply the personal aspects of resignation led to the adoption of a methodology based upon largely open-ended interview questions.

The subjects who were self-selecting and represented four per cent of the teachers resigning from the DSE during the 1991 school year. A pilot study was carried out in late 1991 and early 1992 in which seven former teachers were interviewed, with the remaining 50 teachers being interviewed during the first half of 1992.

During the interviews the subjects were asked two sets of questions. The first were closed questions related to such variables as age, gender, teacher training and qualifications, experience and length of service, position held, present employment status, and salary.

More importantly, teachers were asked to "tell their story" (Wolcott, 1985) through the use of open-ended questions deliberately designed to encourage reflexivity in that the questions took the teachers through their career by asking them to describe why they became a teacher, their positive and negative experiences during their pre-service training and teaching career, the circumstances leading to their resignation and how they felt about resigning. They were asked to reflect upon and trace how and why they gradually -- or suddenly as the case might be -- became disillusioned or dissatisfied with their occupation and/or their employer.

Teachers were also asked to reflect on what gave them greatest satisfaction in their teaching career and what would be required to induce them to work once more for the DSE in an attempt to throw some light on factors or variables that might contribute to teacher persistence.

What follows is an examination of the data obtained concerning teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These findings are related to the literature. From there, the implications of the study are considered, and recommendations made for the enhancement of teacher satisfaction and the alleviation of teacher dissatisfaction, the latter a phenomenon linked directly to teacher

stress for those interviewed in the study. It should be noted that around 60 per cent of those interviewed had remained in education following their resignation from the DSE. All names used are fictitious.

What Satisfies Teachers?

There was a very high degree of consensus as to the sources of career satisfaction from those interviewed. In most aspects, these findings strongly supported previous findings of the literature.

The greatest source of satisfaction was clearly pupil achievement, which thus demonstrated teacher accomplishment, ranging from the child who mastered a simple task or concept for the first time to the student who achieved success in the H.S.C. and later life. As will be seen below, many of those interviewed spoke of a "light going on", and of the sparkle of wonder in a student's eye when something became clear for the first time. There was a clear preference for the facilitation of pupil learning rather than mere instruction or the transfer of knowledge, the teachers gaining more from "leading" and "facilitating" than "telling".

Changing pupil behaviour and attitudes was also a significant source of satisfaction, many of those interviewed speaking of how troublesome students or students not interested in school had "come around" over time due to their efforts.

Recognition from others was also a commonly stated strong source of satisfaction, whether the recognition came from parents, other teachers or superiors. More experienced teachers gained satisfaction from recognition for out of class activities and whole school roles, although many maintained that their greatest satisfaction had come from classroom teaching rather than administration or higher duties associated with promotion.

Self-growth and the mastery of both subject content and teaching skills was also a source of satisfaction for those interviewed. Less experienced teachers gained satisfaction from achieving a satisfactory learning environment or from successfully undertaking a professional task such as organising an excursion, while more experienced teachers gained satisfaction from wider roles such as whole school activities and responsibilities such as running a department, or completing a higher qualification. Thus, less experienced teachers were very classroom centred, while more experienced teachers tended to be more school centred in their sources of satisfaction.

Good relationships with students, parents, and other teachers was also a commonly recognised source of satisfaction, as was later contact with former students who spoke favourably of the contribution the teacher had made to their development and education, although this occurred only rarely.

Overall, teacher satisfaction for those interviewed was found to be tied up closely in what could be termed the human or affective domain and centred on achievement, both of pupils and of themselves and of recognition for this. What follows are a small, representative selection of responses to the question of personal sources of satisfaction. Less experienced teachers speak first, followed by more experienced teachers and those in supervisory positions.

Mandy is a 22 year old former secondary English History teacher. In her career of only two terms, Mandy's source of greatest satisfaction was "probably the kids' work and how they worked ... I loved it when everyone was working, not fighting ... when it worked, I thought 'this is beautiful'".

Michelle is a 30 year old former French and History teacher who resigned after three years service with the Department. During her short teaching career, Michelle gained satisfaction from "other staff relationships, which are important in a difficult school" and from "relationships with kids after the first year ... being an elective class I took them on ... I also liked the freedom to teach as I liked, I was never under anyone, which was a bonus".

Paula, a 25 year old secondary Science teacher, resigned after one and a quarter years of service with the Department. She recalled how she gained satisfaction from teaching "a couple of good classes ... I could actually teach them fairly freely ... [they were] actually listening". Satisfaction came too from "seeing that I'd coped, and was doing my job properly ... although it was hectic", according to Paula.

Julie, a 28 secondary Science teacher, resigned after five and a half years of teaching. Reflecting back over her career, Julie stated that she gained greatest satisfaction from "relationships with kids, seeing them achieve. I was close to some of my senior classes, they were not really bright but they were a great bunch of kids ... I'm still in contact with some of them and went to a lot of their 21st parties".

Hazel, a 35 year old primary teacher with 13 years experience, gained greatest satisfaction from "just knowing I'd done well on a class ... had done well with children, you can't beat that feeling". She also gained satisfaction "when big events I planned came off well".

Jan, a 35 year old secondary Social Sciences teacher who taught for 15 years with the Department, recalled how during her career she gained greatest satisfaction from "seeing kids that had been difficult coming around, seeing then achieve" and from excursions where "you worked, had a good time and they returned as a united group".

Wendy, who taught for 13 years with the Department as a primary teacher, stated that she gained greatest satisfaction from "the kids, working with them ... it was a privilege seeing them enjoying, creating, achieving, extending them ... I enjoyed working with kids at that time of their lives".

Karen, an experienced 48 year old former primary teacher, recalled how over the years she came to enjoy teaching and to "love learning", Karen being "happy to share with others". She gained satisfaction from "the reaction of kids ... when they said they enjoyed something, when you awakened something in them". The "occasional pat on the back from parents" also gave Karen satisfaction.

Russell is a 35 year old former primary teacher who spent the last four of his 15 years with the Department as a Home School Liaison Officer. In his career, Russell stated that he gained satisfaction from "kids with difficulties, helping them and when kids make it, in sports, school captains of high schools, I follow them through, it's great", and from the "respect I had in the school and community. I still see kids in the street of 25 ... they tell me I was the best teacher they ever had ... I still get calls from the parents of the kids at my last school".

June is a 40 year old former primary teacher who resigned after 20 years with the Department. Looking back over her career, June stated with conviction that her major source of satisfaction was "definitely child orientated ... getting through to kids ... when they came up later and said 'you were my favourite teacher' ... I couldn't even remember their names ... when I left, so many parents rang me at home ... I got little notes from parents [during my career] which meant so much ... when this sort of thing happened it was the highlight ... more important than praise from the Principal or other teachers".

Helen is a 39 year old former primary teacher who resigned from the Department after 15 years service. Looking back over her career, Helen stated that she gained most satisfaction from "achievements within the classroom, getting to know children, knowing they had respect for me, doing things they enjoyed, simple things like putting on the school play at the end of the year which was a great success".

Grahame, a 40 year old secondary Music teacher with over 16 years experience, recalled how he gained great satisfaction from the contact with students, and with their parents. He described the rewards he gained from taking students in Year 7 "who knew nothing about music ... and were great in Year 12 ... some became professional musicians and told me that they would never had done it without me".

Liz, a 39 year old primary teacher who became a school counsellor, recalled how during her time as a counsellor and prior to that as a teacher, she gained satisfaction from "the privilege of seeing kids grow" and in counselling, from "seeing kids happy ... you could offer them something concrete". She also gained satisfaction from "being close" to her peers.

Debbie is a 51 year old former secondary Art teacher who was originally trained as a primary teacher. In her career, Debbie gained satisfaction from "knowing that you gave a kid a shunt in the right direction ... you got through, did your job" and from "when you see the results of your work ... when kids from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve, real battlers ... [and] when parents say 'thanks a lot'". Debbie believed a key aspect of teacher satisfaction was liking children, and that "if you didn't like kids you would go bananas".

Hilary is a 36 year old former secondary English and History teacher who taught for 14 years with the Department. Looking back over her career, Hilary stated that she gained satisfaction from "teaching senior English, I loved it ... I like children very much, like seeing them get successes, even minor ones ... I like the personal rapport with children, and I liked the people I worked with".

Rebecca is a 35 year old former secondary English and History teacher who resigned after 12 years with the Department. In her career, Rebecca gained satisfaction from "shaping difficult kids, working with kids with low self-esteem, kids who were particularly difficult ... I was involved in life sciences, peer support ... I found them particularly useful ... I enjoyed the out of class activities, kids learn a lot more ... I found it particularly challenging".

Marie, a 34 year old former secondary Science teacher who spent 12 years with the Department, stated that she gained satisfaction from "seeing something that I've conveyed ... what I call 'the light goes on effect' ... this has given me greatest satisfaction, being able to use it". Satisfaction came also from "anything to do with the kids ... giving them enthusiasm for the subject ... knowing that you've been able to give them something to hang on to".

Vanessa is a 48 year old former primary teacher who resigned from the Department after 17 years of teaching spread over a period of 29 years. Her last appointment was to a special school for disturbed and under-privileged students. Looking back over her career, Vanessa stated that she gained greatest satisfaction from "seeing the light dawning on children ... children with reading problems reading for the first time ... just to see that you are getting through to the students ... teaching is a wonderful thing to do ... a wonderful vocation, the most important vocation, next to medicine".

Dianne is a 42 year old former secondary Home Science Head Teacher who resigned after 19 years with the Department. In her career, Dianne gained satisfaction from "being head of a department, being able to work with different people, the challenge ... doing the things outside the school, also welfare work within the school ... it's the people, that's what it boils down to".

Paul, a 55 year old former secondary Deputy Principal, resigned after 33 years with the Department before later returning as a classroom teacher. Paul gained great satisfaction from "achievements of the kids I taught, I marvelled at how well they do, in spite of the lack of resources" and from "performing a difficult task under difficult circumstances ... having a win, success".

Joanne is a 40 year old former secondary Social Sciences teacher who finished her 16 year career with the Department in a senior Head Office position. In her career, Joanne said that her sources of satisfaction were "initially the kids ... later, the management, the responsibility, running the school ... [her last school] was so exciting, terrific, an extraordinary school". When she moved to Head Office, Joanne received satisfaction from "running things, having an input into decision making ... lobbying ... the enormous variety, managing projects ... national meetings".

Clare is a 47 year old former primary teacher who spent 22 years with the DSE before she resigned from her Head Office position. Clare stated that she gained satisfaction as a teacher from "relationships with students in class", and from "watching them go forward", while as an administrator, she gained satisfaction from "seeing things happen for kids in schools".

Sources of Teacher Dissatisfaction

Generally, the question on the interview schedule which asked the respondents to comment upon their major sources of dissatisfaction in teaching elicited more lengthy and diverse responses than did the question preceding it which asked the respondents to identify their sources of satisfaction.

However once again, strong commonalities emerged which tended to support the findings of the literature, although some of the sources of dissatisfaction identified by those interviewed related more to the particular context of the study and in particular, to the "reforms" to education made by the then Greiner state Government. For example, the changes in educational policy and procedure which resulted from the tenure of the then Minister for Education, Dr Metherell in the late 1980s and early 1990s were considered a major source of dissatisfaction for many of those interviewed, as will be seen below.

Apart from context specific factors such as changes to staffing ratios, promotions procedures, and so on, the sources of dissatisfaction identified by the respondents tended to be school and system centred and related more to administration and extraneous factors, whereas the sources of satisfaction identified above tended to be classroom centred and more related to the actual task of teaching. Relationships with superiors and the Department of School Education, along with the standing of teachers in society, were found to be common sources of dissatisfaction. Thus, broadly speaking, the sources of dissatisfaction for those interviewed could be said to be structural or administrative, while the sources of satisfaction examined above were more of a human, affective nature.

A selection of responses to the issue of sources of dissatisfaction follows, with less experienced teachers speaking first, followed by more experienced teachers, those in school promotions positions, and finally those formerly with out of school roles such as Head Office personnel.

A secondary English History teacher, Ma esigned from her position at a Departmental high school after just two terms. Mandy sai r greatest source of dissatisfaction was "just the amount of kids in the classroom [aver size was 28] ... I couldn't get to all the kids I wanted to ... class sizes really annoyed t underlies behavioural problems, boredom ... extra duties e.g., lunch, roll call", were also sources of dissatisfaction for Mandy.

With 15 years experience teaching Science and Agriculture in Egypt, Joseph resigned from the Department after less than a year. In Australia, Joseph said he received "no help ... [people] make judge [sic], not help ... I liked to teach the kids, but there was bad discipline".

Paula resigned after just over one year as a secondary Science teacher. In contrast to her own education at "a good public school" and her favourable experiences during practicum, Paula now "saw what a stressful job it was, so unhealthy". She felt "not free to teach the way I wanted, I felt stunted, restricted ... I had to gear the whole lesson to how they would behave" and felt that she was "banging my head against a brick wall". The poor standard of discipline was a major source of dissatisfaction for Paula, as was the "morale of the other teachers ... they were always complaining ... there was a whole negative atmosphere", something which Paula thought problematic when "you are just starting your career". Some teachers openly questioned her choice of career and talked about resigning while others were concerned with salary and other industrial matters which Paula maintained did not interest her. Socially, Paula said that sometimes "I was embarrassed to say I was a teacher", and this concerned her.

Linda taught secondary Science for four years before taking up a position as an education officer at a fauna park. Dissatisfaction for Linda came from the poor public perceptions of teachers and from the leadership at her last school which she described as "not poor, but not great, not what it could have been". "Difficult Year 12 students who didn't want to work" and "parents sticking up for kids" while general "parental support was lacking" also caused dissatisfaction, Linda stating that "no one comes to parent teacher nights ... no value is put on education at home ... parents shirk their responsibility". Linda also described her "frustration with changes being made all the time [in education] ... more documents, more policies, it was frustrating, I didn't have the time to do it properly, you only had a 40 minute lesson to incorporate all these policies ... I felt I didn't have control, there were all the perspectives [to be included], I didn't have the time physically ... I didn't do it as well as I would have liked, I always had work to do".

Dennis stated that he gained "no satisfaction from teaching. It is just like an office job in the public service ... teachers are expected to give out positive reinforcement all the time but get none themselves ... there is no pat on the back or financial incentive, no feedback from the Principal ... They are quick to jump on you when you make a mistake".

Julie taught for five and a half years as a secondary Science teacher with the Department before resigning. Julie found "falling professional standards and attacks from the media, uninformed criticisms about long holidays and teachers being treated like grubby little unionists" sources of dissatisfaction. People felt that they could criticise education because "they've all been to school, that makes them experts".

A former secondary French and History teacher who taught with the Department for just over three years, Michelle derived dissatisfaction from "the lack of resources, there was never enough money for adequate textbooks and equipment, I had to do fund raising ... there was also a lack of support in the hierarchy because there was no Head Teacher, there was not enough support for discipline". Michelle also found the "power struggle for elective classes with other faculties" a source of dissatisfaction.

A primary teacher, Lee taught for six years with the Department before resigning to have children. Later, she returned and taught for ten years in a variety of capacities with the Department before leaving once more at the end of 1991. For Lee, dissatisfaction came from the decline in "respect from children and society ... teaching is not as respected as it once was". Lee was "not a disciplinarian, but discipline is needed ... if there is not discipline at home, it has to come from somewhere".

Sue taught secondary Home Science for eight years with the Department before resigning. Sue recalled how she "didn't like being treated like a number", particularly during the time leading up to her second forced transfer when no one on the Home Science staff wanted to leave the school and "every morning we were asked who was going to go ... The school wouldn't help to select someone, and eventually I was chosen because I had no senior class ... I had given it to someone going for promotion". The large size of her last two schools was also a source of dissatisfaction to Sue because "you don't know [pupils'] names or the staff, and there is more chance of inconsistency" because of the large number of teachers. Not having time "to have lunch" and "arguing with kids" were also sources of dissatisfaction for Sue, as was the "nine to three" view of teachers held by the public.

Wendy resigned after 13 years as a primary teacher. She found the impersonal nature of the Department a source of dissatisfaction as:

> working in a system which was impersonal didn't do much for the self-esteem either for staff or students ... negative publicity from the Department about teachers and schools was unhealthy and made negative teachers. This causes problems with the self-esteem of teachers and with pupil self-esteem. Good friends of mine are going down like sinking ships, losing their liking for kids. I still like kids.

Wendy said that she was "not totally in favour of the system" and that "maybe there needs to be a two strand system, academic and technical, I don't really know. Kids are forced to go on and are ill-equipped for the H.S.C. and for the world at large". Wendy also believed that:

> teacher education is outmoded ... out of touch with the real world, e.g., violence, broken families ... teachers go straight back to school ... children have changed ... they don't think or act the same as years ago. A lot more support is needed, there is a need to look at teachers' roles ... too much is expected of one person. You have to juggle being an administrator, educator, specialist. People are needed for each role.

Marie resigned from the Department after 12 years service as a secondary Science teacher. For her, dissatisfaction came from "what I call the system, the Department of Education ... how it ran, what it expected ... I was only there for 12 years but I saw so much turning away from what is supposed to be the purpose of education, the children ... it reeked of politics and had nothing to do with the classroom".

Alan taught for a total of 13 years with the Department as a primary teacher, resigning on two occasions. For Alan, dissatisfaction came from "colleagues who didn't do their job, particularly superiors ... I have never been supported by my superiors ... never had any sincere recognition or reward from them", something Alan thought essential to the development of a "happy school".

Jan taught secondary Social Sciences for 15 years with the Department of School Education prior to her resignation. For Jan, dissatisfaction came from "the lack of resources at school, the pressure on money" and the "lack of discipline ... your hands are tied now, there is little backup from the Department ... students are suspended for a short time when they really should be out ... pushing kids through to the H.S.C. is really a waste of time". Jan was also very critical of the new promotions procedures where teachers "big noted themselves" and were promoted on the basis of "how well they could present themselves and talk others around ... they make terrible Head Teachers and are not supporting or realistic, they are no good in the classroom and couldn't teach their own grandmother".

Helen was a primary teacher with the Department for 15 years prior to her resignation. Helen recalled how while she always gained satisfaction from classroom teaching, she felt growing dissatisfaction throughout her career:

> I learned that I got on well with children at a personal level, but found I was getting into situations where I was having difficulty coping with their problems ... over time there were more and more difficult problems to solve. Parents expected schools to solve their problems ... the school was in an area of floating employment, there were few professional people, no access to cultural activities, it was isolated, travel was expensive ... so many families were on welfare ... I couldn't get the results the community wanted, there was no one to help me ... I couldn't leave it at school, couldn't handle bad altercations with kids, but it was not really their fault ... I became quite stretched. I also had a great deal of difficulty getting on with the Headmaster, and this caused me a great deal of anxiety ... I had three kids while I was at the school, and he used to have P and C meetings where he said it was not right for my class to have two or three teachers while I was on maternity leave ... he got them to write letters to the Department to complain ... I was shot behind my back.

An experienced teacher who taught primary classes in both New Zealand and Australia and who later taught as a secondary teacher before resigning to teach in a private school, Karen found the workload, particularly the work that needed to be completed out of school time, a cause of "frustration". Karen stated that in her opinion, English teachers tended to have a greater workload than other secondary teachers. She described teaching as "a seven day a week job" which "you could make a 24 hour a day job if you were not careful". Karen also "hated marking exams", particularly since she was unconvinced of their efficacy.

Sandra had 20 years of broken service in Departmental primary and high schools spread over 26 years, initially as a primary teacher and later as a "Support Teacher Learning Difficulties". For Sandra, dissatisfaction came from "Executive, people in charge who just didn't have a clue". Sandra also "didn't like striking, it was a poor image to portray to students and parents ... I don't like the Federation attitude ... politics is too much in it". Teachers "who had to be carried" were also a source of dissatisfaction for Sandra as "they would have been fired in private enterprise".

Grahame taught secondary Music for 16 years before becoming a Music lecturer at a university. However, while enjoying classroom teaching, Grahame stated that he was also expected to:

> organise school bands, choirs, rock eisteddfods, play the piano on school assemblies, organise annual concerts ... I would get to school at 7-30 in the morning while maths teachers I shared a staffroom with arrived at five to nine and opened a text book ... I worked every lunchtime, after school, and most weekends and only got a period off a week, or at most two or three at my later schools ... It was a bit off.

Grahame was also deeply concerned with:

> the inequity of the system ... at my first [disadvantaged] school I received only a $400 [annual] budget from the Principal and no help, at my second school $1,500 and plenty of help and moral support, which is even more important than money ... at my last school [on Sydney's more affluent north shore] the Principal apologised the first year because he could only give me $4,000 ... in my last year there he gave me $12,000 ... this made me think about the public system, its inequity.

With 18 years experience as a primary teacher, Bill thought that "face to face I had something to offer, but more and more the Department made justification in writing [for what he was doing]

more important than being in the classroom". Bill "started to go for promotion twice, but was depressed to see people put on a show". When people he thought undeserved received promotion he found this "disheartening and pulled out twice".

A Teacher Librarian in a primary school with 25 years experience with the Department, Jackie recalled that when she had completed her librarianship training, she had thought that:

> the sky's the limit ... you could go to in-service courses and come back and co-ordinate the whole staff ... you were a de facto executive. They were going to make it an executive position but now the number of tasks is the same ... Before, with 300 kids you used to get a full-time librarian and a clerical assistant. Now I have two libraries to administer, four days at one school and one day at the other, which is closed the four days that I'm not there ... I have a clerical assistant for one day only ... there is no hope of fulfilling all the roles, it really destroys me, it is so contrary to what we should be doing in an information age, so soul destroying.

A former secondary Home Science Head Teacher, Dianne resigned from the Department after 19 years service. For Dianne, her major source of dissatisfaction was "change being imposed on me without any input or choice at all on my part, no choice at all ... being told what to do by the Minister ... and the wash over of the really low morale of my colleagues".

Judith had 24 years teaching experience, culminating in her final appointment as Assistant Principal in a Riverina Region primary school, from where she resigned to take up a position at a university. Judith found the unrealistic expectations held by parents for their children to be a source of dissatisfaction. Judith also recounted how she had worked very hard for her first inspection for promotion, and although successful, she resented how males that she had worked with appeared to pass inspection much more easily due to what she termed "the old boys' network". The "new directions happening in education" were also a source of dissatisfaction to Judith. She believed that the "whole mould of education" was being changed with classroom teaching and curriculum development being downgraded in favour of "managing, computing and accounting". She believed that the government had "duped" schools and the public, and that while schools were supposed to be more independent, they had in fact lost control over areas such as curriculum where stricter controls were now in place.

With 33 years experience with the Department culminating in his appointment as a secondary Deputy Principal, Paul was very clear as to the major source of his dissatisfaction, which was "the bureaucracy which takes three quarters of the education dollar and does nothing for kids or teachers ... they are escapists from the system doing stuff all for the classroom. If they all disappeared, we would all be better off".

A former secondary principal, Michael resigned after 34 years experience and now worked on occasions as a casual teacher. Michael recalled how as a Head Teacher, he had "enjoyed the role ... it is the ideal position, but I haven't greatly enjoyed the Deputy or Principal positions ... The Principal's job bored me to an extent and the pressures from outside left me dissatisfied". Dissatisfaction had also come when Michael had been a Head Teacher and there was "antagonism for the subject matter from the boss ... it was quite traumatic, the small subjects really suffered in the school". As a Deputy Principal, Michael had "no worries with the boss whatever ... it was the nature of the job in a small country high school ... I was in charge of all the unmastered departments ... I had over half the staff. The best part of being a Deputy Principal was classroom teaching. I found it difficult to deal with other people's problems ... I am a little bit diffident in discipline ... I prefer all avenues to be explored before people are sent to me". As a Principal, dissatisfaction came from "frustration with the system, especially the hierarchy of

the ... Region ... sheer frustration at getting action or being able to do something about certain types of kids ... we had 1,420 kids but not as many disruptive kids as elsewhere".

A former primary teacher who taught with the Department for five years, before becoming a secondary teacher for 18 years where he became a Head Teacher Administration, David then took up a position for two years at the Head Office of the Department. For David, dissatisfaction came from "rules and regulations ... the growing workload on senior teachers ... that good teachers got more and more work to the detriment of classroom teaching" and from "more and more accountability that was not real accountability". David also felt dissatisfaction from the "lower community status" of teachers and from "Government criticism that teachers weren't working ... community perceptions are put out by the Government that we work 9-00 to 3-30 ... It gave me very little satisfaction".

Joanne spent eight years as a secondary teacher before moving to the Head Office of the Department where she spent a further eight years before taking leave without pay and later resigning. For Joanne, dissatisfaction came from "really ratty kids at [her last two schools] ... how revolting they were to you at times". Dissatisfaction also came from her Head Office work, which at times was "incredibly tedious, I did the real work at home ... just accepted it ... I would get myself a good reputation and further my career ... but sometimes I got sick of struggling, putting so much in ... it was a bit much at times, I got very sick of that ... it was a very stressful job".

A highly experienced teacher with 22 years experience with the Department of School Education, the last 17 years spent on secondment and at Head Office, Clare recalled that as a teacher, dissatisfaction came from "administrivia not relevant to teaching such as standardised tests, which were just another negative thing for many kids". As an administrator, Clare was dissatisfied with the fact that "you didn't need any knowledge in the area to be an expert, no educational background or experience".

Ross had 39 years service with the Department, culminating with his appointment as an Assistant Director in Head Office. Ross' sources of dissatisfaction came almost entirely from his time in Head Office. Ross expressed "frustration with Head Office machinations, the duplicity ... the bloody mindedness of politicians, Ministers ... I worked closely with them ... it was very frustrating".

Teacher Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction: Relation of the Study Findings to the Literature

There was strong confirmation in the study of the generally accepted sources and nature of teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The work of Herzberg, et.al., (1959), Sergiovanni (1967), Holdaway (1978) and Kaufman (1984) had suggested that satisfaction and dissatisfaction were the results of largely separate sets of factors. This was confirmed in the study with teacher satisfaction being found to be more classroom centred and revolving around the work itself, while teacher dissatisfaction was found to be more school and system centred and revolved around the conditions of work such as policies, procedures and administration. The study findings in regard to satisfaction and dissatisfaction were also broadly consistent with the earlier work of Maslow (1954), McClelland (1961), Vroom (1964), Argyris (1964) and Alderfer (1972).

The major sources of satisfaction for those interviewed in the study were personal achievement, pupil achievement, the "reaching" of students in some way, and recognition. Additional sources of satisfaction, as suggested by the literature, were favourable relationships and responsibility. Sources of dissatisfaction for those interviewed were poor relationships with superiors, school and Departmental policies and procedures, administrative workload and matters such as forced transfers and being declared "unsatisfactory" or "of concern". Criticism from society, increased

expectations, rising student retention and the politicisation of education were also sources of dissatisfaction.

However, what was revealed by the study that the literature had not mentioned was the importance of context specific sources of dissatisfaction, which in the case of this study, included the changes to education brought about in New South Wales since the late 1980s, and in particular, the role of the former Minister for Education, Dr Metherell, in these changes.

Strategies To Enhance the Quality of Teacher Satisfaction

Given the strong commonalities regarding teacher satisfaction revealed by the literature and confirmed by the study, the following strategies designed to enhance teacher satisfaction and to reduce dissatisfaction are advocated. Despite appearing obvious in many cases, their importance shines through strongly in any attempt to examine teacher satisfaction, dissatisfaction, stress, school climate, relationships or morale. Often, they tend to be overlooked, both due to the day-to-day "hurly burly" of schools and the larger changes and pressures outlined in the introduction to this paper.

An important point, however, is that the study revealed the futility of seeking "quick fix" solutions, and hence a broad based series of strategies are suggested which, in total, will enhance school climate and thus educational outcomes.

1. Public Recognition of Staff Achievement

Schools and educational systems need to explore avenues for publicly recognising the achievements of teachers and other staff. Despite a possibly "hard-bitten", cynical veneer, teachers do need and respond to genuine recognition for the achievements of themselves and their students. Teachers commonly complain that they give out more and more positive reinforcement while receiving less and less appreciation for their efforts, although empty praise and tokenism will only make the situation worse. Principals, on the other hand, complain that they frequently thank people for their efforts, yet are rarely thanked in return. A climate where genuine appreciation and recognition are regularly and freely given may well make it more likely that principals themselves will be the recipients of such recognition.

In the same vein, casual or emergency teachers (and sometimes guest speakers) are frequently overlooked or taken for granted. They perform a difficult, valuable role and really appreciate a personal letter or message at the end of the term/semester/year thanking them for their contribution, although an obvious form letter can diminish the impact of this.

When teachers leave or resign, there needs to be a proper function to recognise their contribution to the school. If possible, partners should be invited to these gatherings. The study showed that teachers' partners frequently do not appreciate the demands of teaching, and that non-teachers tend to focus on the "long holidays and short hours" while paradoxically resenting the time that their teacher partner needs to commit to the task of teaching.

2. Exit and Other Interviews

Teachers who do leave, for whatever reason, should undergo an exit interview. This is a procedure long established in other fields, yet rarely used in larger educational systems. Hopefully teachers will feel free to be frank about their reasons for leaving. It may not always be appropriate for them to be interviewed by senior school staff, in which case they may need to

speak to a third party. These insights will prove invaluable, whatever their nature. Given the investment the community places in teacher training and the skills that teachers develop over time which are difficult to quantify, it seems highly questionable to simply allow such people to walk out the door, particularly if they are leaving due to job dissatisfaction, the sources of which may well remain on their departure.

As well as the instance of resignation, regular formal and informal interviews should be held to monitor teachers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels. Those in supervisory positions and more experienced staff need to be accessible, sympathetic, and confidential in their dealings with teachers (see 5, 6 below).

3. Publicity

Schools need to use the local media to publicise their achievements. Local newspapers in particular are an under-utilised resource and are usually only too happy to regularly receive copy from local schools. A suitable publicity/media officer to expedite this should be appointed. Schools need to get into the habit of inviting the media to special events and should prepare a mailing list of media outlets/contacts who can be informed of coming attractions as a matter of course. The local and other media is also a useful source of negative publicity. What are the concerns of the community and society regarding education? What is your school doing in regard to these criticisms and demands? Turn this to your advantage. As well as increasing teacher satisfaction through publicising student and teacher achievement, use of the media will help to remedy some of society's at times misinformed criticisms of schools.

4. The Invisible Principal and Communication

Teachers without special responsibilities or positions of authority will probably have limited access to the principal. One way to overcome this is for the principal to visit departments or faculties on a rotating basis to be available for two-way communication. This time, although an additional burden for the already over-stretched principal, will be well spent. Despite an "open-door policy" which some principals attempt to adhere to, many staff will not take advantage of this, unless they have a complaint or a problem. Formal staff meetings, especially where the staff numbers more than fifteen, are largely a failure in promoting two-way communication. Many teachers have the perception that staff meetings consist of "front-end loading" of information from the hierarchy, with general discussion squeezed or eliminated by a packed agenda. Communication remains a vital concern for any complex organisation.

5. Positive Relationships

Overall, relationships with others were found to contribute both to teacher satisfaction and teacher dissatisfaction. In particular, favourable relationships with fellow teachers were an often cited source of satisfaction, while unfavourable relationships with superiors and the DSE contributed to dissatisfaction for many of those interviewed. Teachers spoke of the dissatisfaction that arose from being treated as a "number" and of the impersonal nature of the Department and the "system". For many, the final "straw" was the way they were treated at the time of their resignation, with no attempt to find out why they were leaving save for the official resignation form, and no real recognition for the often substantial contribution that those interviewed had made to education and to the Department. Usually, the only recognition received, if any, was a simple form letter received some time after resignation with a statement that the teacher's performance had been "satisfactory", or in some cases, one or two lines of impersonal "thanks" for being a teacher.

For the beginning teacher, the relationship with the supervisor was seen as vital, although experienced teachers appeared more confident and autonomous within their particular roles and while they might complain about their supervisor, appeared to take a pragmatic attitude towards carrying out of their responsibilities. The relationship with students was seen to be at the centre of the teaching role, with a good relationship being a powerful source of teacher satisfaction while a poor relationship was seen as quite destructive to teaching, learning and teacher self-esteem. Relationships with parents and the community tended to be underdeveloped, with teachers and schools keeping both groups at a distance, although relationships with parents, where favourable, were seen as a powerful source of teacher satisfaction. However, communication between teachers and parents and community members appeared to be left to occasions when something negative had occurred.

As for the immediate family members of those interviewed, it was found in a number of cases that the pressures of teaching had contributed to the break up of several relationships although the exact contribution could not be determined.

Where the other partner was not a teacher, it was common for there to exist a degree of misunderstanding of the pressures and responsibilities of teaching, while a number of female teachers also spoke of difficulties caused where their partner was less educated than themselves. The impact of teaching on teachers' partners is the subject of a current research project being undertaken by the writer.

Establishing and maintaining harmonious relationships is obviously an essential task for any organisation. It needs to remain a continuing priority and some of the other measures outlined here such as communication and recognition will assist in this regard. Those in supervisory positions need to play particular attention to maintaining good relationships with their subordinates (see 6 below). It seems that rapid change can put great pressure on professional and personal relationships.

6. Supportive Supervision

Beginning teachers complain of being watched, judged, but not helped by their supervisors. They want feedback and assistance rather than pseudo-clinical supervision. To this end, they need a mentor as well as a supervisor. Teachers need to know what they are doing right, as well as what they are doing wrong.

Teachers know who the "dead wood" among their number are and resent having to "carry" these people. Teachers need to know that non-productive staff are being adequately supervised and professionally guided, and not hidden. Related to this point is the question of delegation and administrative demands. A common source of dissatisfaction for teachers is that it is nearly always the willing/efficient staff member who receives extra responsibility.

7. Pupil Achievement

Absolutely central to teacher satisfaction is pupil achievement. The touchstone for all that occurs within a school should be pupil welfare and accomplishment. The acid test for any proposed change is whether it will facilitate or hinder pupil achievement and well-being. To this end, it is essential that classroom teaching remains the central focus and purpose of the school. Teachers interviewed in the study were highly critical of those who promote themselves at the expense of classroom teaching through involvement in "high flier" activities. The "regular" classroom teacher needs to feel valued. They were also critical of attention being

diverted away from classroom teaching and learning by the need to "sell" the school and to comply with administrative and accountability demands.

8. The Personal Touch

It was clear from the study that teachers dislike being treated as a number and getting the "run-around". Unfortunately, large employing systems tend to be the worst offenders in this respect. Teachers need the personal touch and need to feel that their requests and complaints will be acted upon quickly and humanely in a manner devoid of the "isms" such as racism, sexism, ageism, tokenism, etc. Experienced teachers in particular do not respond well to be treated as a "child" by their superiors. They want straight answers, even if the message is unpalatable. Executive staff need to ensure that the personal touch is evident in the school and may have to intercede in dealings with systems on their teachers' behalf to ensure this eventuates.

9. The Physical Environment

The physical environment of a school is an underrated contributor to teacher dissatisfaction. The study under discussion and research carried out at comprehensive high schools (Dinham, et. al., 1993) showed just how keenly aware teachers and students are of the perceived deficiencies of the physical environment of their school and how they tend to identify strongly with it. Schools need to periodically assess the situation with facilities, graffiti, rubbish removal, paint, seating, gardens, shade, etc.

10. The Burden of Administrivia, Policies and Procedures

Difficulties related to unwanted postings, forced transfers, and limitations of leave were revealed by the study as sources of dissatisfaction, as was the fact that these often impacted to a greater extent upon female teachers.

Changes to curriculum have also been noted, as have been changes to school administration, particularly those that had occurred since 1988. Of particular concern to those interviewed, especially those formerly in executive positions, was the increasing expectation that schools should be run as a business, with many of the financial responsibilities formerly borne by the regions and Head Office of the Department now being devolved to schools, with commensurate deleterious effects upon educational outcomes. There was a feeling that in some cases, teachers were taking on extra responsibilities to make themselves "look good" for promotion and that this was at the expense of students. Concerns were also expressed about equity issues, with some schools having capable and financially secure communities behind them to assist in fund raising and school management, while other schools lacked this economic and general support base.

Also of concern were changes that had occurred to staffing procedures, with some schools losing teachers and composite classes having to be formed. A number of those interviewed also complained of losing non-teaching staff from their schools.

A view expressed on a number of occasions was that such changes frequently lacked philosophical or pedagogic foundation and were being imposed on schools as a result of the politicisation of education.

Grave doubts were expressed by the introduction of new promotion procedures, with concern both about the efficacy of the procedures and of the effects that its introduction had made on

schools. Both male and female teachers expressed the view that they or their gender had been discriminated against through the introduction of merit promotion procedures. The importance of the interview for promotion and of having the "right C.V." was also cause for concern. There was a feeling, particularly from a number of the women interviewed, that the new promotions procedures had resulted in a down-grading of the status of classroom teaching and that these procedures were being used to increase teachers' workloads in schools.

Means have to be found to relieve the presently increasing administrative burdens on teachers and schools. The introduction of support staff and para-professional staff to take on some of the time consuming yet menial tasks performed by teachers such as roll marking, money collection, budgeting, playground duty, duplication of teaching materials, cleaning, issuing of materials and the like, would allow teachers to devote greater time to more professional tasks. Executive teachers also need additional clerical and administrative support. There needs to be evaluation of recently introduced measures such as "merit" based promotion and the effects that these measures have had on teachers and schools. Not only must measures such as merit promotion be fair, they must be seen to be fair, otherwise the perception of unfairness can destructive, whatever the reality.

11. Resources

In line with the findings of the literature, resource deficiencies contributed more to teacher dissatisfaction than they detracted from teacher satisfaction. Teachers interviewed in the study often complained about lack of resources. Schools need to determine whether such complaints are genuine, or just misinformed. Schools need to communicate the total resource context and involve staff in the prioritisation and allocation of resources. If complaints remain, then there is a more serious problem.

12. The Issue of Change

Change was found to be a significant factor contributing to teacher dissatisfaction in the study. If teachers are to be satisfied and retained, then the pace and scope of change needs to be carefully considered by those in positions of authority. Teachers need to understand the reasons for change, to have input to change, to be committed to change, and to be assisted in its implementation. Where change is outside the influence of Governments, educational systems or schools, then its impact on teachers and schools needs to be carefully considered and modified or limited if possible. A key aspect of change is communication. In many cases, those interviewed actually agreed with changes occurring within education, but found the manner in which change was implemented to be highly dissatisfying.

13. Society's Expectations and Criticisms

Both inexperienced and experienced teachers interviewed noted with concern how the nature of society had changed, with greater social problems affecting a wider range of society's members and with commensurate pressures upon schools to solve society's problems. This situation was exacerbated in some cases by the fact that those interviewed had come from relatively stable backgrounds and were, by their own admission, unprepared for the social problems they encountered in their students and in some cases, the parents of their students.

Clearly, in the eyes of those interviewed, society's demands on teachers and schools had increased, with new curriculum and social "perspectives" having to be incorporated into teaching programs while at the same time schools were expected to increase student

performance in the so-called "basics", resulting in an "over-crowded" curriculum. Not only were schools and teachers expected to solve society's problems while ensuring academic performance increased, but they were also expected to meet the economic and industrial demands of the nation through the production of a trained body of people ready to take their place in the workforce and, in turn, to help build a "clever country".

New indicators and methods of accountability had been introduced for school staff and students to measure and ensure performance and these plus the over-crowded curriculum mentioned above had greatly increased the workload and pressure on teachers and schools, detracting from classroom teaching. At the same time as these pressures were being brought to bear on schools, the esteem in which the public, the private sector and government held teachers appeared to have fallen, with some teachers expressing reluctance to reveal their occupation in public for fear of inviting misinformed criticism about teachers' "easy" conditions.

There is no easy solution to the matter of societal criticism and expectations. Broadly, there needs to be an urgent reassessment of what schools and teachers are expected to do. Additional "perspectives", policies and subjects cannot be continued to be "tacked on" to the school curriculum. It may well be that there are too many subjects and too high expectations. Rationalising the curriculum, providing specialist support staff to handle some of the more difficult areas and providing some instruction at alternative times and by other trained staff may be required. There are good arguments for training teachers longer with paid release time to pursue further study once the career has begun, paying them more, and relieving them of their more onerous responsibilities, as outlined in 10 above. Expecting teachers to act as de facto social workers and family figures while carrying an increased administrative and teaching burden is highly problematic for education and the individuals concerned.

14. Teacher Stress

As suggested by the literature, stress was found to be inherent to the work of the teachers interviewed in the study. All those interviewed described their sources of stress and how these often lay in the areas of dissatisfaction outlined previously. Generally, those interviewed had experienced mounting levels of mental stress which in a number of cases had resulted in physical illness. Several of those interviewed described particularly stressful periods of their career which had in their opinion resulted in burnout. The stress experienced by those interviewed in some cases spilled over to family members and resulted or at least contributed to marriage breakdown.

The sources of stress tended to vary with experience and in some cases gender. Less experienced teachers were more stressed by their workload which was often accomplished by working late at night and at weekends and by their inability to discipline their classes. More experienced teachers were more likely to cite administrative sources of stress, while for those in Head Office positions the restructuring and politicisation of education since the late 1980s was a major source of stress. Generally, poor relations with superiors was a common source of stress, while for women, there were perceived elements of sexism and discrimination contributing to these relationships, particularly those with male superiors.

Efforts to alleviate stress were found to be chiefly palliative and left to the individual, with the taking of leave being common, especially for females, while in some cases medication had been prescribed. For some, the only solution to the stress they experienced was resignation (for a fuller discussion of stress, see Dinham, 1993).

The issue of stress raises some important questions. How is teacher stress regarded in your school/system? Is it a largely unspoken issue? Is stress seen as evidence of personal failing or a

legitimate occupational hazard? Are mechanisms in place to identify and remedy the sources of teacher stress, or are these ignored and attention, if any, given to palliative measures such as leave or the taking of medication? Educational systems and employers need to undertake benchmark studies to ascertain stress and satisfaction levels in teachers. For too long, teacher stress has been put in the "too hard" basket. A first step is to identify the sources of teacher stress, rather than applying "band-aid" solutions to its manifestations.

Concluding Remarks

Many of the above strategies may appear simplistic, yet others seem almost beyond resolution. They also largely ignore contextual factors. For example, many of those interviewed in the study had taught in isolated, small schools or schools with large non-English speaking populations at some stage, and teachers in such schools have special needs. Every school is unique and every principal and teacher is an individual working with individuals. The measures may also take precious time to implement, and might in fact already be in place in schools and systems to some extent. However research has confirmed that they remain central concerns of teachers, and are thus worthy of serious consideration, particularly in a time of rapid educational and social change.

It seems timely then, given the recent and continuing climate of educational change, that the spotlight is shone once more upon teacher welfare if we are really concerned with providing quality and equity in education.

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